

## The Enlightenment 1715 - 1800

Philosophy in the Age of Reason

## *Ancient Regime*: A reminder

### Characteristics

- Political: Absolutism
- Economics: Mercantilism
- Social Structure: Hierarchical
- Religion: Established churches

## World of Progress & Reason

- The Enlightenment developed from many past influences
- Judeo-Christian traditions: equality of souls
- Greek philosophy: rationalism
- Roman Stoicism: people are basically equal
- Renaissance: Humanism/Individualism
- England: political developments in 1600's
- Scientific Revolution: applying the scientific method of critical observation to human affairs (society)

## Enlightenment Themes

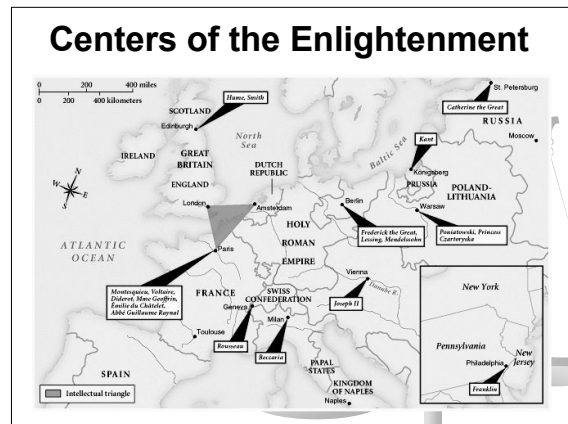
- Autonomy of Reason
- Perfectibility and progress
- Confidence in the ability to discover causality
- Principles governing nature, man & society
- Assault on authority
- Solidarity of enlightened intellectuals
- Disgust with nationalism

## Natural Laws

- Scientific Method established confidence
- If physical laws could be studied and understood...
- Why not use REASON to discover NATURAL LAWS - laws that govern human nature?
- Using knowledge of natural laws should lead to progress in society
- Reason --> solving all social, political, & economic problems... right?

## D'Holbach's Comment

- "Ignorance and servitude are calculated to make men wicked and unhappy. Knowledge, reason, and liberty can alone reform them and make them happier.... Men are unhappy only because they are ignorant; they are ignorant, only because everything conspires to prevent their being enlightened; they are wicked, only because their reason is insufficiently developed."



### The 18th Century

- ※ Political History --> Reform
- ※ Intellectual History --> Reason
- ※ Cultural History --> Individualism
- ※ Social History --> Increased Literacy  
-- Age of Aristocracy
- ※ Economic History --> Mercantilism  
to Capitalism

### 18th Century Politics

- ▲ BRITAIN --- Constitutional Monarchy
- ▲ FRANCE --> Royal Absolutism  
(cultural and religious unity)
- ▲ PRUSSIA, HABSBURG EMPIRE,  
RUSSIA --- "Enlightened Despotism"
- ▲ OTTOMAN EMPIRE --- traditional  
empire

### Why Study the Enlightenment?

1. Its values --- autonomous & free use  
of one's own reason,  
toleration, progress &  
questioning authority.
2. Assumptions --- perfectibility of all  
humans; reliability of  
the evidence of the  
senses & instruments  
of measurement.

### Why Study the Enlightenment?

3. Practices --- technological treatment  
of nature.
4. Institutions --- scientific institutes,  
centralized states, &  
technocratic experts.
5. Debate:  
– Religious Values v. Secular Values

## Philosophes

- “lovers of wisdom”
- French group of Enlightenment thinkers (term later applies to similar thinkers from other countries as well)
- Strong advocates of political liberty
- Attacked religious & political authorities for using censorship to interfere w/the free use of human intellect
- Use of reason = progress



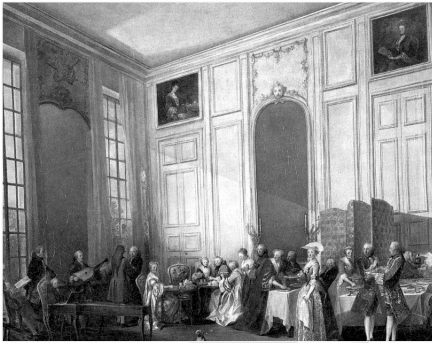
## Enlightenment Institutions

Salons  
Academies  
Masonic lodges  
Newspapers  
Coffee houses  
“Public opinion”  
Forbidden literature

An 18<sup>th</sup> Century  
English Coffee House



## A Parisian Salon



## A Parisian Salon



## The Salonnières



Madame Geoffrin  
(1699-1777)



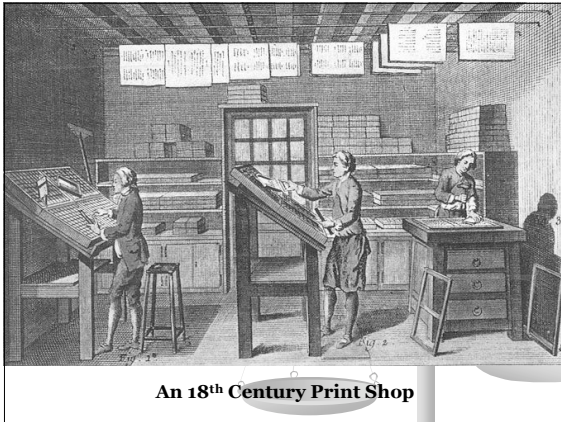
Mademoiselle  
Julie de  
Lespinasse  
(1732\*-1776)



Madame  
Suzanne Necker  
(1739-1794)

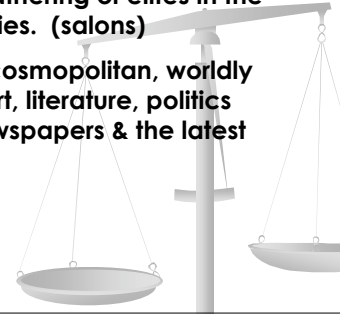
## Madame Geoffrin

- At 14 she married Monsieur Geoffrin who was 48! Life settled in...
- She was transformed into a leading *salonnière* after being invited to a neighbor's salon
- The “kingdom” of Rue Saint Honoré became well attended, even by visiting monarchs
- Vigée Lebrun's observation: “Women ruled then”



## The “Republic of Letters”

- φ URBAN --- gathering of elites in the cities. (salons)
- φ URBANE --- cosmopolitan, worldly
  - music, art, literature, politics
  - read newspapers & the latest books.



## Reading During the Enlightenment

- ‡ Literacy:
  - 80 % for men; 60 % women.
- ‡ Books were expensive (one day's wages).
- ‡ Many readers for each book (20 : 1)
  - novels, plays & other literature.
  - journals, memoirs, “private lives.”
  - philosophy, history, theology.
  - newspapers, political pamphlets.

## An Increase in Reading



## “Must Read” Books of the Time

Isaac Newton	<i>Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy</i> (1687)
John Locke	<i>Essay Concerning Human Understanding</i> (1690)
John Locke	<i>Two Treatises of Civil Government</i> (1690)
Voltaire	<i>Philosophical Letters</i> (1734)
Montesquieu	<i>The Spirit of Laws</i> (1748)
Jean-Jacques Rousseau	<i>The Social Contract</i> (1762)
Jean-Jacques Rousseau	<i>Émile: or On Education</i> (1762)
Denis Diderot and Jean d'Alembert	<i>Encyclopedia</i> (1751–81)
Condorcet	<i>Sketch for a Historical Picture of the Progress of the Human Mind</i> (1795)

## Denis Diderot (1713-1784)



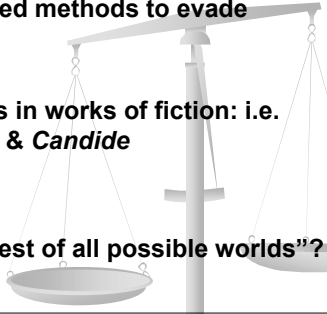




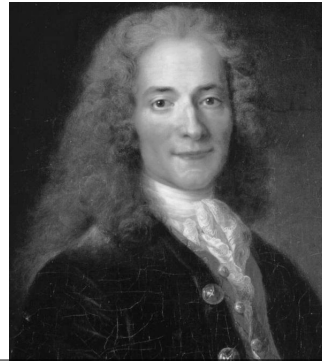
## Censorship (cont)

- Writers employed methods to evade punishment
- False names
- Disguised ideas in works of fiction: i.e. *Persian Letters* & *Candide*

What was the “best of all possible worlds”?

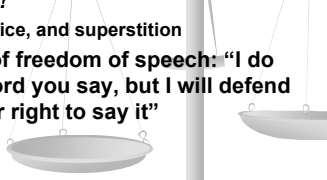


## Voltaire (1694-1778)



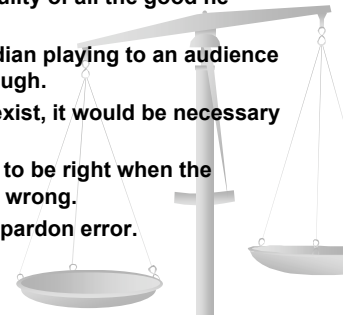
## Voltaire

- “My trade is to say what I think.”
- Extremely intelligent/cutting wit
- Wrote, wrote, & wrote some more
- Targeted corrupt officials & idle aristocrats
- “*Ecrase l'infame!*”
  - Inequality, injustice, and superstition
- Great defender of freedom of speech: “I do not agree w/a word you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it”



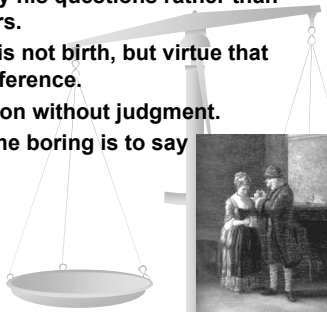
## Voltaire’s “Wisdom” (I)

- Every man is guilty of all the good he didn’t do.
- God is a comedian playing to an audience too afraid to laugh.
- If God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent him.
- It is dangerous to be right when the government is wrong.
- Love truth and pardon error.



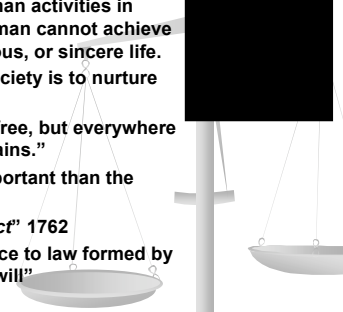
## Voltaire’s “Wisdom” (II)

- Judge of a man by his questions rather than by his answers.
- Men are equal; it is not birth, but virtue that makes the difference.
- Prejudice is opinion without judgment.
- The way to become boring is to say everything.



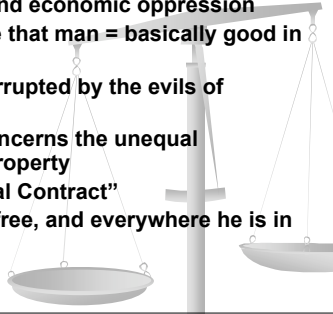
## Rousseau 1712-1778

- If commerce and industry are the most important human activities in society, then man cannot achieve a moral, virtuous, or sincere life.
- Real purpose of society is to nurture better people
- “All men are born free, but everywhere they are in chains.”
- Society is more important than the individual
- “*The Social Contract*” 1762
- Freedom = obedience to law formed by the “general will”



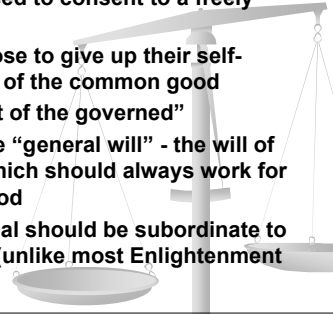
## Rousseau

- Hated political and economic oppression
- Agreed w/ Locke that man = basically good in state of nature...
- But man was corrupted by the evils of society...
- Especially as concerns the unequal distribution of property
- 1762: "The Social Contract"
  - "Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains."



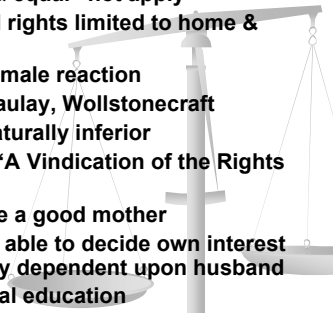
## Rousseau

- However, ppl need to consent to a freely formed govt
- Ppl should choose to give up their self-interest in favor of the common good
- This is "consent of the governed"
- R put faith in the "general will" - the will of the majority - which should always work for the common good
- Felt the individual should be subordinate to the community (unlike most Enlightenment thinkers)



## Limited "Natural Rights" for Women

- Slogan of "free & equal" not apply
- Females' natural rights limited to home & family
- By mid 1700's female reaction
  - De Stael, Macaulay, Wollstonecraft
  - Women not naturally inferior
- Wollstonecraft: "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman"
  - Yes, duty to be a good mother
  - But should be able to decide own interest & not be totally dependent upon husband
  - Called for equal education



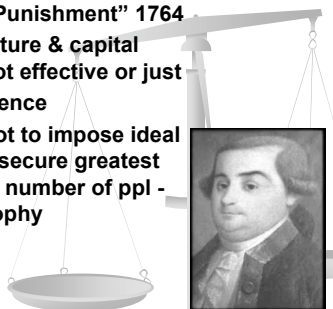
## Women in the Enlightenment - Mary Wollstonecraft

- "I do not wish for women to have power over men, but over themselves"
- Objected to separate spheres, demanding same rights for women as men during French Revolution



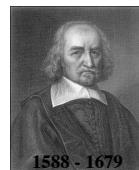
## Beccaria (1738-1794)

- "On Crimes and Punishment" 1764
- Attacked both torture & capital punishment as not effective or just
- Effective = deterrence
- Purpose of law not to impose ideal perfection but to secure greatest good for greatest number of ppl - Utilitarian philosophy

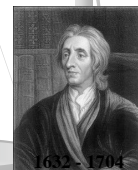


## Political Philosophy

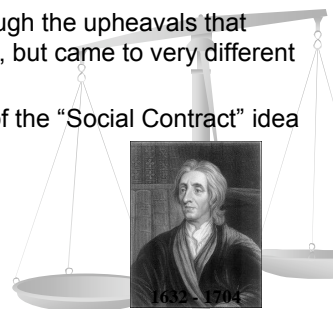
- First, Hobbes and Locke:
- Both lived through the upheavals that shook England, but came to very different conclusions
- Two versions of the "Social Contract" idea



1588 - 1679



1632 - 1704



## HOBBS & LOCKE

- Hobbes
  - "Leviathan"
  - ppl = cruel, greedy, & selfish
  - If not controlled = fight, rob, & oppress one another
  - Life w/o control ('state of nature') = "nasty, brutish, & short"
- Locke
  - "Two Treatises of Government"
  - ppl = basically reasonable & moral
  - ppl = natural rights: i.e. life, liberty, & property

## Their Conclusions

- Hobbes
  - ppl entered into a "social contract"
  - Agreed to give up state of nature for organized society
  - Only accomplished w/an all powerful government - absolutism
  - Sided w/Stuart monarchs vs. parliament
- Locke
  - ppl form governments to protect natural rights
  - Best govt = limited power & accepted by all citizens
  - If govt fails to protect rights, ppl have **right to rebel** and overthrow that govt
  - Sided w/Parliament vs. Stuart monarchs

## Montesquieu (1689 - 1755)

- "Spirit of the Laws" - 1748
- Studied European govts, ancient & medieval Europe, Chinese & Native American cultures
- Sharply criticized absolute monarchy
- Admired limited monarchy of England
- Protection vs. tyranny = separation of powers into branches: legislative, executive, & judicial
- "checks and balances"

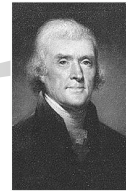
## The American "Philosophes"



John Adams  
(1745-1826)



Ben Franklin  
(1706-1790)



Thomas Jefferson  
(1743-1826)

.....life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.....

## BIG DEBATE: Religion v. Reason

- The Enlightenment did NOT banish religion and superstition.
- They existed side by side --- one often provided justification for the other.
- Clergy played an important role in the training of scientists & philosophers. (many were active in the field themselves!)
- Voltaire fought for those accused of heresy.
- The *Encyclopedie* used covert topic headings to address religion critically.
- Deism

## The Royal Academy of Sciences, Paris



Official Scientific Academies in Europe During the Eighteenth Century

	Official Scientific Societies in all Europe (excluding colonies)	Official Scientific Societies in France
1700	5	2
1789	65	29

## Zoology & Biology



A dissection at the Royal Academy,  
London.

## Chemistry Labs & Botany Gardens



## Natural History Collections



- ✦ Cocoa plant drawing.
- ✦ Sir Hans Sloane (1660-1753).
- ✦ collected from Jamaica.

## Private Collections



The Origins of Modern Museums.

## On to Economics

- Physiocrats = rational economic reform
- Laissez-faire = businesses should operate w/little or no govt interference
- Real wealth comes from making the land more productive (not just the acquisition of gold & silver thru trade)
- Supported free trade and no tariffs (taxes on imported goods)

## Adam Smith



- "Wealth of Nations" 1776
- Free market = natural forces of & demand - "invisible hand"
- Free market should regulate business - not govt
- Manufacturing, trade, wages, profits, economic growth all linked to supply & demand
- Suppliers gain profit from meeting demand
- "profit motive"



## Enlightened Despots

- Absolute rulers who used their power to bring about political and social change



Catherine



Joseph



Frederick

## Catherine the Great (1762 - 1796)



- Russia - Romanov dynasty
- German princess who gained the throne of Russia in a coup vs. her husband, Peter
- Read Enlightenment literature, exchanged letters w/Voltaire & Diderot
- Made limited reforms in law & govt
- Ultimately acted to protect absolute power, & reforms did not last

## Joseph II (1765 - 1790)

- Habsburg dynasty - Austria
- One of 16 children!
- Considered most enlightened
- Continued & expanded mother's reforms
- Chose talented MC over nobility as officials
- Especially made legal reforms
- Granted toleration to Protestants & Jews
- Ended censorship
- Sold unproductive monasteries/convents, used \$ to build hospitals
- Abolished serfdom!
- However, reforms reverted after his death

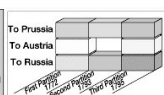


## Frederick the Great (1740-1786)



- "first servant of the state" - but tight control
- Had Voltaire visit Berlin to estab academy of science
- Fought wars - worked for the common good
- "In my kingdom, everyone can go to heaven in his own fashion."
- Goal: efficient govt
- Reorganized civil service & simplified laws
- "rationalized" bureaucracy = more power 4 Fred

## The Partitions of Poland



- 1772

- 1793

- 1795

## Russian Expansionism in the Late 18c



### **The Legacy of the Enlightenment?**

1. The democratic revolutions begun in America in 1776 and continued in Amsterdam, Brussels, and especially in Paris in the late 1780s, put every Western government on the defensive.
2. Reform, democracy, and republicanism had been placed irrevocably on the Western agenda.

### **The Legacy of the Enlightenment?**

3. New forms of civil society arose --- clubs, salons, fraternals, private academies, lending libraries, and professional/scientific organizations.
4. 19c conservatives blamed it for the modern "egalitarian disease" (once reformers began to criticize established institutions, they didn't know where and when to stop!)

### **The Legacy of the Enlightenment?**

5. It established a materialistic tradition based on an ethical system derived solely from a naturalistic account of the human condition (the "Religion of Nature").
6. Theoretically endowed with full civil and legal rights, the individual had come into existence as a political and social force to be reckoned with.

### **Sapere Aude!**

**Dare to Know!**

Have the courage to break the shackles of your immaturity and use your own understanding!